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Japan

Agricultural Situation

This Week in Japan

2001

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Report Highlights:

Japan's Food Agency Recently Decides to Not Purchase GMO Wheat; MAFF to Accept Port Imports from Some EU Countries; Mr. Tsutomu Takebe Named as the New Minister of MAFF; Food Agency Announces First Ordinary Minimum Access Rice Tender for FY2001; Japan's imports of U.S. soybeans are forecast to decline in MY 2001/2002; MAFF Proposes Mandatory GM Feed Safety Assessment.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
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This Week in Japan

An Update of Major News and Events from the Largest U.S. Agricultural Export Market

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- i Japan's Food Agency Recently Decides to Not Purchase GMO Wheat:** Japan's Food Agency recently indicated it will not purchase GMO wheat, even if approved for sale in Japan, due to consumer safety concerns about food produced through biotechnology. Japan's wheat millers announced in February that they will not use GMO wheat. Japan's negative response to GMO wheat prospects, in the wake of the StarLink corn issue, highlights the importance of U.S. industry and government coordination on GMO wheat development, safety assessment, distribution and commercialization.
- i MAFF to Accept Port Imports from Some EU Countries:** MAFF announced, effective April 25, it will remove Japan's import suspension of pork and pork products from Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Austria. While the ban remains on the other EU countries, resumption of imports from these 4 countries, particularly Denmark, will help stabilize Japan's frozen pork raw material supply situation for processing utilization.
- i Mr. Tsutomu Takebe Named as the New Minister of MAFF:** Mr. Tsutomu Takebe, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, has been named as the new Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). The Japanese media reports that "Takebe is known as a strong lobbyist for the agricultural, forestry and fishery industries". He is 59 years old and represents Hokkaido, the largest agricultural production area located in the northern part of Japan.
- i Food Agency Announces First Ordinary Minimum Access Rice Tender for FY2001:** The Food Agency (FA) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) announced on April 27 that it will conduct the first Ordinary Minimum Access (OMA) rice tender for about 5,000 metric tons and Simultaneous Buy and Sell (SBS) rice tender for 25,000 metric tons for the Japan Fiscal Year (April 2001 - March 2002) .
- i Japan's imports of U.S. soybeans are forecast to decline in MY 2001/2002:** Japan's imports of U.S. soybeans are forecast to decline in MY 2001/2002 due to Japanese food soybean users' continued efforts to shift to non-GM soybeans from Canada and Brazil. Total meal imports are expected to decline in MY 2001/2002 due to a weak demand for compound feed and an increase in meat imports. Imports of oil products are also forecast to remain flat due to consumers' continued cautious purchasing behavior stemming from Japan's stagnant economy.
- i MAFF Proposes Mandatory GM Feed Safety Assessment:** Ministry of Agriculture (MAFF) is considering a mandatory safety assessment for feed and feed additives produced through recombinant DNA techniques. For any unapproved varieties, such as StarLink corn, MAFF is considering establishing a tolerance to prevent disruptions to feed imports. To-date, more than 20 GM feeds have been approved through a voluntary assessment; importation of unapproved varieties is discouraged through administrative guidance. A decision on the proposal is expected in time for implementation by the beginning of Japan Fiscal Year 2002 (April 1, 2002).

Upcoming events: May 9-13 USA Rice Federation Team; May 14-18 Compliance Review Staff of USMEF/Tokyo; May 19-26 APHIS Site Visit; May 20-23 California Prune Board